

## **Elliott Keller**

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Artist Statement, 2021

Author Anne Bogart writes, “Theater that does not channel terror has no energy. We create out of fear, not from a place of security and safety.” As an artist and dancemaker, the notion of exploring and creating work that related to my identity as a gay man had, until recently, terrified me. The director of my graduate program suggested this writing by Bogart and I recognized the salience of my experience and how critical it was for me to make art related to this topic. This is my lived and embodied knowledge, and I seek to center queer stories in my creative work.

I've often gravitated to subject matter that feels not of this world, and as I've questioned why this content speaks to me, several possibilities have emerged. I've long considered myself a realistic optimist, grounded by the way things seem while also inspired by the hope of what could be. For me, this is an act of conjuring. I believe there is much more to our existence than what most of us choose to see, but it requires a certain excavation of self. A questioning. A search for truth in order to begin this process of awakening that which exists inside. The alchemical process of transforming the ordinary in to the extraordinary.

In terms of aesthetic, I value athleticism and nuance. I appreciate the virtuosic capacity of the dancers with whom I work because it is something that I strive for in my own dancing body. And yet, much of our story is told through the smallest gesture, affect, or mannerism. I explore an extensive range of movement invention to mirror the complexity of each individual, cultivating a pallet that is full of contradictions. There is strength in softness. There is clarity in ambiguity. There are answers in questions. Our bodies and our sexuality can hold a full spectrum of masculine and feminine ideals simultaneously.

Poet Christopher Poindexter writes, “You are a collection of all the people you have ever loved.” I am a summation of my experiences. I am a product of my friends, teachers, family and lovers. I am shaped by the dances I have studied and my daily physical practices. I seek to synthesize all that I am and know to produce something uniquely and authentically me. I cannot control how my art is received, but unlike the Elliott of days past, I now strive to work from a place of vulnerability because that is the only way to create something meaningful for myself or others.